IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

Listing of Claims

Claims 1-4 (Cancelled).

5. (Currently Amended) An image processor as set forth in claim ~~4~~ 17, wherein a density between said dots in each cell is calculated on the basis of distances between energy focused dots positioned in said respective cells.

6. (Currently Amended) An image processor as set forth in claim ~~2~~ 17, wherein said dots in said each cell are grown in a dot growth pattern so as to be most uniform in density with respect to dots to be generated in the cell adjacent to the cell of interest.

7. (Original) An image processor as set forth in claim 6, wherein said dot density in the cell of interest is calculated on the basis of distances from dots in the cells adjacent to the cell of interest.

8. (Currently Amended) An image processor as set forth in claim ~~1~~ 17, wherein said threshold values are set in said dither matrix so that an average of set values in said each cell is an intermediate value of density levels in said image data.

9. (Currently Amended) An image processor as set forth in claim ~~1~~ 17, wherein said threshold values in said dither matrix are set differently in said different cells of the dither matrix.

10. (Currently Amended) An image processor as set forth in claim ~~1~~ 17, wherein said dots are set at any of a plurality of particular positions in said cells of said dither matrix.

11. (Currently Amended) An image processor as set forth in claim ~~2~~ 17, wherein ~~said~~ growth patterns of said dots in said cells of said dither matrix are made to have an identical shape when a variation in the dot shape at the time of generating an identical size of dots causes a printing density of an actual printer to be largely changed.

Claims 12-13 (Cancelled).

14. (Currently Amended) A method of claim ~~1~~ 18, wherein a density between said dots in each cell is calculated on the basis of distances between energy focused dots positioned in said respective cells.

15. (Cancelled).

16. (Currently Amended) A method of claim ~~15~~ 19, wherein said dot density in the cell of interest is calculated on the basis of distances from dots in the cells adjacent to the cell of interest.

17. (New) An image processor comprising:

an image memory for storing multi-valued image data therein;

pixel data acquisition means for acquiring the image data stored in said image memory on a pixel-by-pixel basis;

dither matrix storage means for storing a dither matrix of an irregular disposition of dots plotted by setting in a cell a plurality of candidate dots to be next plotted adjacent to dots already disposed in the cell and measuring the distance of each of said plurality of candidate dots from a nearest one of said already disposed dots in order to detect one candidate dot of longest distance among the measured distances, plotting as a next

dot the detected one dot of the longest distance, and plotting sequentially such candidate dots likewise detected, thereby said dot matrix having the irregular disposition of dots of non-iterative distances between dots plotted and those plotted just thereafter;

threshold value data acquisition means for acquiring, from said dither matrix storage means, threshold value data corresponding to the image data on the basis of an address of the image data inputted from said pixel data acquisition means; and

a comparator for comparing the image data of the pixel unit inputted from said pixel data acquisition means with the threshold value data inputted from said threshold value data acquisition means to output a predetermined binary signal.

18. (New) An image processing method comprising the steps of:

storing multi-valued image data in a memory;

storing in storage means a dither matrix of an irregular disposition of dots plotted by a first substep of setting a plurality of candidate dots to be next plotted adjacent to dots already disposed in a cell and measuring the distance of each of said plurality of candidate dots from a nearest one of the already disposed dots in order to detect one candidate dot of

longest distance among the measured distances, a second substep of plotting as a next dot the detected one candidate dot, and a third substep of plotting sequentially such candidate dots likewise detected, thereby said dot matrix having the irregular disposition of dots of non-iterative distances between dots plotted and those plotted just thereafter;

acquiring image data from said memory on pixel-by pixel basis;

acquiring, from said dither matrix, threshold value data corresponding to the image data on an address basis of the acquired image data; and

comparing the acquired image data with the acquired threshold value to output a binary signal.

19. (New) A method according to claim 18, wherein said dither matrix is divided into a plurality of cells, dot growth is made by arranging dots in each cell as concentrated and making growth patterns mutually different, and wherein said dots in said each cell are grown in a dot growth pattern so as to be most uniform in density with respect to dots to be generated in the cell adjacent to the cell of interest.